CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
4 SEP 1974

books

CIA: But who will watch the watchers?

Without Cloak or Dagger, by Miles Copeland. New York: Simon and Schuster. $8.95.

By Leon Lindsay

If you want to know as much about the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency as possible — without compromising its present or future operations, of course — what better source than a man who was present at its inception, has served it long and well in many capacities, and retains his status in the agency's "gentlemen's club"?

Miles Copeland is that man. For 278 well-written pages the author educates the reader about intelligence, espionage, and counterespionage, carefully avoiding any exposures of sensitive identities or operations.

There is not much doubt that this is an "authorized biography" of the CIA, published to counter recent publication of adverse articles and books.

If it is not a defense or an apologia for the Agency — which has recently seen its romantic, "cloak and dagger" public image stripped away to expose the uglier aspects of its operations — it is at least an attempt to present the "real" CIA.

If, in casual, disarming references, some of the cold-bloodedness, cliquishness, and self-justification slip through — well, that is not going to alarm the reader very much. Even the assertion that *someone* has to take care of "dirty tricks" may seem a truism in these times.

But there are still, one would hope, a lot of Americans who are not going to be able to accept Mr. Copeland's final chapter, "Some Conclusions." Most of these "conclusions" are stated with the kind of righteous assurance one usually expects only from fanatics. For example:

"If it isn't already, the CIA may well become 'the world's most powerful government agency,' as one columnist called it."

The word "agency" may not exactly put the CIA on the same plane as the three great branches of U.S. government — until one reads a few lines farther on:

" 'The dangers are increasing,' an Agency official told me, and our power to deal with them is increasing proportionately. But so is the public's fear of us. Although the nature of the dangers is such that the Agency can hardly become less secret in handling its information . . . , it *can at least put its trust in a representative number of Congressmen*" (my italics).

What are the "increasing dangers"? Mr. Copeland identifies two: first, terrorism, and particularly new-left terrorism, which he says is a worldwide, if amorphous conspiracy; second, the competing imperialisms of the Soviet Union and Communist China — vying with each other to economically strangle the U.S. by taking over, through one means or another, areas of the world with strategic materials.

The extent of records kept by the FBI, Army CIC, and other agencies, in connection with suspected left-wing associations, has only recently been discovered — and decried. Mr. Copeland admits that the CIA has the most comprehensive computerized file on individuals in the world, and he gives it a name: "Octopus."

The file's existence is justified, he says, by the terrorist threat. Even some of the CIA's liberals don't like it. But, explains Mr. Copeland, even these civil-rights-conscious people accept its necessity for *they know* frightening facts the ordinary citizen doesn't.

He makes some other statements that seem relevant: *"Removing the dangers inherent in a 'powerful' government agency is not a matter of decreasing the power, but of ensuring that those who exercise it are incorruptible and truly responsive to public interest."* (italics his).

The CIA "will support politicians, political groups, and governments through the world [including in the U.S.?] whose objectives are compatible with our own; it will sometimes work with unpopular organizations — American, international, and foreign.

"All these actions are certain to result in some public outcry, and the extent to which the agency is able to survive it will depend on the extent to which the public becomes confident that the agency really has [illegible] shable information necessitating the moves, and is acting entirely in the public interest and not for the gain of individual political figures, political parties, or special-interest groups."

In this case, the reader is led to assume, as in justifying other activities, the CIA "will give its contacts in Congress ample information to prove the necessity for so doing." The implication here, possibly unintentional, is that the agency itself will determine who those congressional contacts will be.

But the same "defusing" process that works to abort assignments that the CIA "gentlemen's club" considers unwise has other uses. Mr. Copeland gives a very disturbing example:

When James Schlesinger became director of the Agency and immediately began a shakeup (for whatever motives), his efforts were cleverly sabotaged. Clearly, the CIA will be internally changed only if the "gentlemen's club" wishes it so.

Mr. Copeland says one maxim is being inculcated in the younger men now: " 'Always keep in mind whom you are working for' — meaning it's not for the President of the United States as a person, not for the Director of the CIA, but for the CIA as an instrument of the American democracy."

Considering the existence of "Octopus," the Agency's coziness with selected politicians, "dirty tricks" at home and abroad, and Mr. Copeland's indication that the CIA strongly doubts the possibility of real detente, one can't help but wonder about their definition of democracy.

In fact, after reading Mr. Copeland's conclusions, one might conclude that Big Brother is about to unlock a door marked "1984."

Leon W. Lindsay, chief of the Monitor's New England news bureau, was a member of the U.S. Army's Counter-Intelligence Corps.